

EDITORIAL

Ten years ERJ

U. Costabel

Happy Birthday *ERJ*! I am pleased to note that the 10 yr anniversary sees you in very good shape. You are flourishing, since you apparently receive good nutrition and tender care from many sides: from authors, readers and the editorial staff. As a society journal, you should be fed with the best scientific work of the members. A growing society like the European Respiratory Society (ERS) needs a growing journal. Now you have expanded so much that you hardly fit into one annual volume. Therefore, starting this year, it was decided to have two volumes per year: each volume including six issues.

You were officially born in 1988 as a product of merging the *European Journal of Respiratory Diseases* with the *Bulletin Européen de Physiopathologie Respiratoire*. Your first chief editors were the former editors of these journals, Erik Berglund and Jean-Claude Yernault. Together, they guided you through the first critical years of infancy with much success. Paul Vermeire steered you from 1990 to 1995, as you developed to become the leading journal in Europe, and the second world-wide (as measured by the impact factor), in the field of clinical respiratory medicine. Your circulation now reaches about 5,500 copies.

1997 was another record year for series. The total number of submitted manuscripts increased again (a total of 1,212 being a new record). Figure 1 illustrates the number of articles submitted by categories for the years up to 1996. Original articles and reviews showed major increases whereas the number of submitted case reports decreased relative to 1994. This may be due to the fact that our policy for the acceptance of case studies has changed, and led to a much lower acceptance rate than for original reports (30% vs 40%). Authors are strongly discouraged from submitting papers on rare cases without new aspects, as compared to what is already known in the literature. Statements such as "this is the third case in the world literature" are in no way a justification to reach priority for publication in the journal. For the last 2 yrs such case studies have been returned directly to the authors without entering the process of peer review.

The *ERJ* receives manuscripts from all over the world. Table 1 shows the geographical distribution of submissions. Again the UK had the leading position (128), followed by Italy (100), Germany (99) and France (96) in 1996.

In 1988 the *ERJ* started with 10 issues and 973 printed pages. Since then this number has increased to 2,941 pages (table 2). I am particularly pleased that now, with about 30 original articles per issue, a true selection and

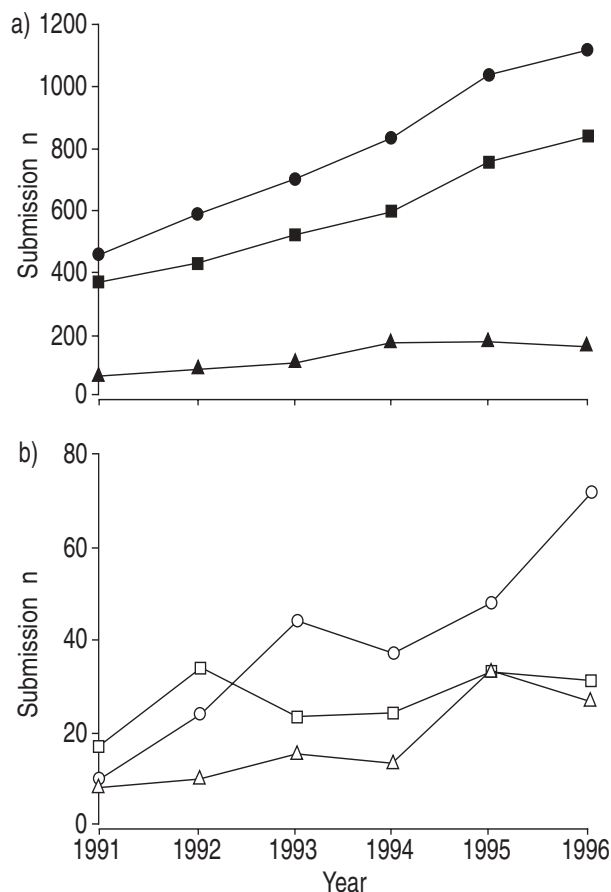


Fig. 1. - a) Annual submission of all papers (●), original articles (■) and case reports (▲); b) annual submissions of reviews (○), editorials (□) and letters (△).

grouping according to subtopics is possible, which is also reflected in the table of contents. This improvement, as well as the new cover, has found favourable responses from the readers.

The handling time for 1996 (figures for 1997 are still incomplete) were as follows (1995 in parentheses): median time to first verdict 67 (75) days; time needed for revision and final decision by the Associate Editor 90 (93) days; time for final editing through Chief Editor and Assistant Chief Editors 8 (11) days; and time from acceptance to publication 134 (107) days. Thus, the total time from submission to publication remained stable at about 10 months in 1995 and 1996.

The number of Associate Editors was reduced again, by appointing only seven new individuals, after 11 left the Board by the end of 1997. This means that the work load for each Associate Editor will further increase compared

Table 1. – Origin of manuscripts by country

Country	1991 (n=461)	1992 (n=584)	1993 (n=698)	1994 (n=829)	1995 (n=1024)	1996 (n=1100)
Western Europe						
United Kingdom	69	98	102	92	125	128
Sweden	35	32	33	35	35	42
Italy	29	48	64	61	93	100
Netherlands	36	48	48	59	81	82
Denmark	17	13	18	22	21	21
France	48	45	70	90	99	96
Belgium	21	31	29	37	43	43
Spain	21	35	51	62	64	77
Germany	23	36	47	53	68	99
Switzerland	5	8	12	11	27	27
Finland	16	9	7	15	23	19
Norway	4	13	10	10	10	13
Turkey	-	11	4	20	15	21
Ireland	3	5	2	6	9	13
Austria	10	6	1	6	9	12
Greece	2	2	9	14	8	15
Portugal	3	3	2	-	1	2
Other countries/continents						
USA	22	24	28	47	55	61
Canada	10	24	18	26	32	37
Australasia	18	22	29	27	32	37
Japan	26	20	43	52	94	77
Eastern Europe	10	18	29	32	27	20
Israel	5	7	9	9	12	14
Taiwan	-	6	6	16	10	11
Other Asia	19	15	13	18	21	21
Africa	6	3	6	8	6	5
S. America	6	3	6	8	3	7

Table 2. – Growth of the European Respiratory Journal from 1990 (first year with complete impact factor) to 1997

	1990	1997
Impact factor	1.12	2.38
Printed pages n	1235	2941
Pages per issue n	120	240
Original articles per issue n	12	30

with previous years. This decision was taken by the members of the Editorial Board at the recent meeting. The feeling was that handling a larger number of manuscripts has not had a negative impact on the verdict times. Thus, I would like to express my thanks to all Associate Editors for their excellent and hard work, particularly to those who are leaving: C.J. Clark, P.W. Jones, H. Klech, T.

Medici, P. O'Byrne, R. Pauwels, B. Rijcken, Y. Sibille, H. Teschler, H. Van Bever, B. Wallaert and the Statistical Editor J.G. van Houwelingen.

More work also had to be done by the staff in the Sheffield Office under the professional management of Wendy Thompson. The production of the Journal functioned very well indeed, despite a major shift in the Technical Editors in Sheffield. There was never a compromise in quality. Highest standards in type setting, scientific technical editing, and printing are characteristic and persisting features of the *ERJ*.

In summary, after 10 yrs the *ERJ* can be considered healthy, both from a scientific and an economic point of view. We are grateful for the support which was received, and will also be needed in the future, from authors, readers, reviewers and ERS members in our continuous striving for excellence.